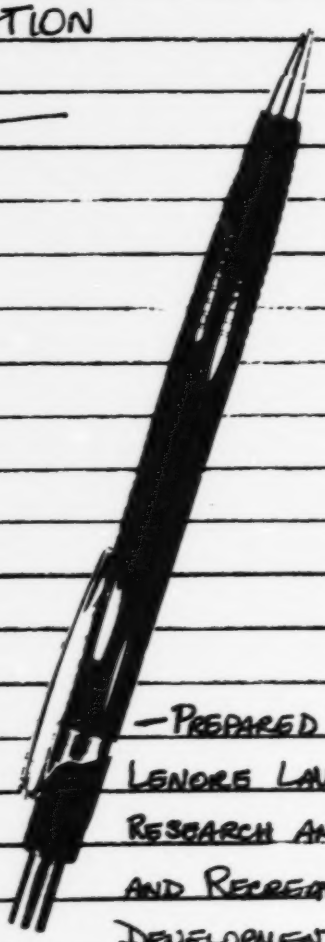
COMMUNITY RECREATION PLANNING —



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COMMUNITY RECREATION PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

Recreation planning is a systematic way of gathering information to help make decisions regarding the development of recreation opportunities.

A Community Recreation Plan is the written record of a community's planning efforts. It outlines the recreation services that exist in the community, identifies future needs, and presents a course of action for orderly development.

A Community Recreation Plan must be clear and address relevant issues. This does not mean that the plan must be lengthy or technical. All the skills and resources necessary to prepare a plan are available within the community, although some direction and advice might be required from the provincial recreation consultant or a private planning firm.

Planning is community - specific; a plan must be sensitive to the characteristics of a community that make it unique from all others. It must be adaptable to the changing needs and conditions of the people and their community.

The decision to plan should emerge naturally in response to community concerns. A community should not begin the planning process without first developing a sound base from which planning can be done. Simply put, a community must prepare to plan. Recreation Commission members particularly must do some serious thinking about the purpose of preparing a plan.

WHY PLAN?

A Community Recreation Plan provides guidelines by which individuals and groups can organize their actions. In a broad sense, a plan is necessary in order to provide decision makers with information to help guide the future development of leisure services. More specifically, a plan can:

- help promote co-operation by defining the roles of various agencies.
- provide guidelines for the orderly development of programs and services.
- provide a basis for determining long range budget requirements.
- provide a means for involving the community in discussing issues and in making decisions.
- reduce "pressure group" planning by involving the community in setting long range objectives.
- provide continuity in services over a specified time frame.
- help to utilize human and financial resources in the most effective way.

INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

To insure that the Community Recreation Plan responds to the needs of the community, it is essential that the public is involved.

Public participation does add time and cost to the planning process, and there are pitfalls to adding the views of many groups to the overall plan.

TECHNIQUES & STRENGTHS	PUBLIC MEETING/ OPEN FORUM	PANELS OF EXPERTS	WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/ DISCUSSION GROUPS	SURVEYS	WRITTEN BRIEFS	MEDIA PROMOTION AND DISPLAY	SIMULATION/ ROLE PLAYING	PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION
PROVIDES INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVES		✓	✓				✓	
PUBLIC SOUNDING BOARD	✓				✓	✓	✓	
CITIZENS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING	✓	✓	✓				✓	
REPRESENTATIVE PUBLIC RESPONSE				✓				
INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS	✓					✓		

FIGURE 1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

Various methods of involving the public in the planning process must be considered. There is no single "right" way to involve citizens. The methods chosen must consider the specific circumstances in each community.

The benefits gained, however, will far outweigh these negative aspects. A well organized program of public participation can:

- aid in the determination of needs and interests.

- increase commitment because the public has contributed to decision making.

- help to obtain different points of view.

- provide a means of public education.

In every community, the public is made up of five groups: individuals, groups, business, public agencies and elected or appointed officials. Each of these groups has different reasons for participating and each may require a different approach to ensure its involvement.

It is not realistic to assume that all groups will wish to participate to the same extent. For some, it is enough to be aware of the planning process and to know that there are opportunities to provide input. Others may wish greater input and opportunities to be involved in actual decision making.

There are a variety of ways to involve the public; no single approach is ideal for all situations. (See Figure 1) A well thought out program of public participation will include several methods, rather than relying on one or two.

IDENTIFY THE NEED TO PLAN

Initially, active members of the community should be brought together to discuss issues, concerns, needs and goals. At the same time, consult with provincial and local authorities for advice on how to proceed.

With the support of these individuals, a community meeting can be held to discuss the preparation of a Community Recreation Plan. At this meeting, the purpose of community recreation should be discussed and issues identified.

FORM A PLANNING COMMITTEE

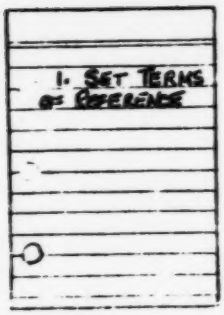
If the Community decides to develop a plan, a planning committee should be formed. This committee will be responsible for taking the community through the planning process. In some communities, the Recreation Commission may assume this role. In other cases, the Commission may add on citizen members or form a planning sub-committee.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The recreation planning process consists of six basic steps:

- setting terms of reference
- gathering information
- interpreting the information
- making recommendations
- implementing the plan
- reviewing the plan.

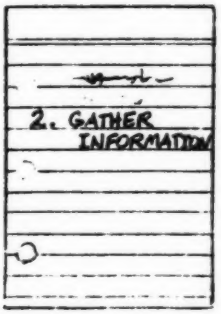
Each of these steps is described below.



Terms of reference set directions and boundaries for the planning committee. The terms of reference should answer the following questions:

- Why does the community want a recreation plan?
- What is the purpose of the plan?
- What does the community wish to achieve?
- What issues will be dealt with?
- What is the extent of the planning committee's authority?
- To whom is the committee responsible?
- What are the limitations of the plan?
- Are there actions that cannot be taken? Why?
- Who is limiting these activities?
- What geographic area does the plan encompass?
- What financial and human resources are available to undertake the study?
- When should the plan be completed?
- How long should the plan apply?
- How will citizens be involved?
- How will the results be communicated?
- Who will be responsible for implementing and reviewing the plan?

Together with the terms of reference, the planning committee should develop a plan of action that outlines necessary tasks and a time schedule for their accomplishment. (See Figure 2)



The collection of relevant information is one of the most important aspects of developing a Community Recreation Plan.

When a planning committee is unsure about what information they actually require, there is a tendency to gather too much. This makes the information confusing and difficult to interpret. What information is needed, why it is necessary and how it will be used should be clearly understood prior to its collection.

BACKGROUND STUDIES: It may be helpful to review social services studies that have been conducted in the area. They may provide useful statistics and policy statements that will give a better understanding of community services.

COMMUNITY PROFILE: A profile contains information about how the community is growing and general characteristics of the people.

10 MEETINGS:	HOMEWORK:
1 Develop Terms of Reference Design a Plan of Action Divide planning committee into 3 or more task groups	Task Group I & II prepares coordinating functions for community meeting. Task Group III prepares copies of information to be reviewed by people attending upcoming community meeting.
2 Share, discuss and make necessary revisions as outlined by the community meeting Re-organize task groups for specific assignments	Task Group I prepares methods of Community Involvement. Task Group II prepares data on Municipal/ Recreation Overview. Task Group III prepares data on Community Profile and Background Studies.
3 Share, discuss and make necessary revisions to Community Involvement Share, discuss and revise information on Municipal/Recreation Overview. Share, discuss and revise information on Community Profile and Background Studies	Task Groups I, II & III begin to develop information on Community Recreation Programs
4 Discuss and correlate information gathered on Community Recreation Programs	Task Group I prepares information on Recreation Open Space Task Group II prepares information on Human Resources Task Group III collect information on Recreation Facilities
5 Share, discuss and revise information on Recreation Open Space	Task Group I collects information from Community Feedback Task Groups II and III prepare information on Possible Direction

6	Share, discuss and revise information on Community Feedback Share, discuss and revise information on Evaluation and Possible Directions Develop section on Recommendations for Action	Develop budgets for those recommedations which require financial consideration
7	Share and discuss budget information Develop section on Implementation Formulate first draft of Community Recreation Plan	Task Groups I and II prepare coordinating functions for community meeting. Task Group III prepares copies of first draft of Plan for those attending community meeting.
8	REVIEW PROCESS Hold community meeting to review first draft of Community Recreation Plan and priorize recommendations. Regional Recreation Consultant may be invited to review first draft of Plan.	
9	Prepare final draft of Plan Arrange to submit final draft to open council meeting requesting councils acceptance, approval and adoption of the plan. A copy of the final draft may be sent to the Regional Recreation Consultant.	
10	Make any final changes to Community Recreation Develop synopsis of Community Recreation Plan and arrange to circulate synopsis of Plan throughout community.	At this point the planning committee has completed its task. Community initiates implementation of Community Recreation Plan. It is important to appoint an ongoing Planning Committee to ensure the implementation, continual monitoring and review of the Community Recreation Plan.

FIGURE 2: SAMPLE PLAN OF ACTION FOR PLANNING COMMITTEE

Much of the information should be available through municipal, provincial or federal government offices. A community profile should include:

- population trends
- breakdown of population by age and sex
- identification of special groups
- economic factors
- relationship of community to surrounding area
- particular geographic features

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND INTEREST: The committee must ensure that it is aware of the needs and interests of community groups and individuals. There are numerous approaches to gathering this information including interviews with community groups, a call for written briefs, and surveys.

MUNICIPAL RECREATION OVERVIEW: The information gathered in this section will help to indicate community needs and interests as well as to identify available resources and to suggest directions for future service.

Items to be included are:

- role of the Recreation Commission
- criteria for appointment to the Commission
- relationship between Commission/Council and Commission/Community groups
- grants recently received
- existing by-laws, policies and agreements
- land use regulations
- budget/current expenditures.

RESOURCES INVENTORY: The Resource Inventory must generate information relating to the provision of recreation opportunities. It is essential to know what existing and potential human, physical and financial resources are available.

a) RECREATION PROGRAMS:

- inventory all programs run by voluntary organizations, municipal government and private citizens.

b) HUMAN RESOURCES:

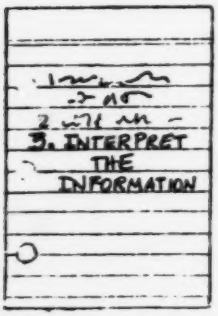
- list volunteer organizations and their objectives
- list individuals currently instructing programs
- list individuals with special skills not currently being utilized.

c) RECREATION FACILITIES (maps are useful here)

- list and locate existing facilities
- include construction and operating costs
- outline management procedures
- evaluate current use
- if possible, analyze current condition

d) RECREATION OPEN SPACE

- locate land presently used for recreation
- identify land zoned for recreation
- identify land to be protected for future open space.



With information regarding programs facilities, needs, interests and resources, it is possible to determine how effectively the community's recreation services are functioning, to identify gaps and to suggest future directions.

To assist in the analysis:

1. Categorize issues/responsibilities: For example, leadership development, programs, facilities, co-operation between community groups, etc..

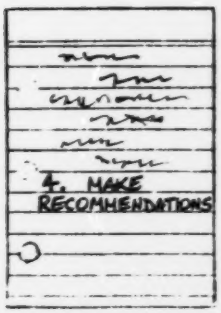
2. For each issue/responsibility indicate possible directions. These may include expansion, deletion, additions and co- operative efforts.

3. Present pros and cons for each course of action.

4. Develop a list of potential alternatives for future development. Refine each alternative.

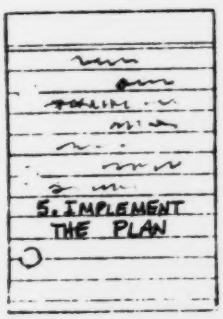
5. Discuss these with the community and priorize them. Test alternatives with individuals and groups for agreement in principle.

The planning committee should refer back to its goals and objectives to ensure that they are being met. It must be remembered that through this process, the community is planning not only for today, but for the future. Do not assume that all conditions (population, economics, environmental) will remain the same.

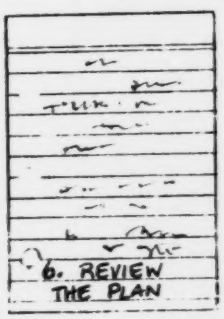


From among these alternatives, a course of action can be developed that will best suit community resources, interests and priorities.

The rationale for the recommendations should flow logically from the goals and objectives for leisure services and from the purpose of developing a plan.



The recommendations should be divided into those that require immediate, short term and long term action. Organizing these into a schedule for the completion of various tasks will aid implementation.



Once the plan is completed, it should be reviewed each year to ensure that the recommendations are still relevant and that conditions in the community have not altered significantly.